

ATC CONTACTS

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Children from Stubbings Infant School who came on a trial visit to the ATC recently are seen here puzzling over the miracle of the hydraulic ram, which pumps water uphill using only flowing water. The ATC is also working with Stubbings to develop plans for a 'green' playground

at the school. From April the ATC will be open properly for guided school visits - interested teachers should contact H. Gregg at the Centre.

Going Green for Softies

OK so we can't persuade you to give up your car! But here are some really easy tips to reduce its impact on the world.

- ☛ Try to drive less. Think about whether you always need to use your car. Cutting out some of those short journeys could really help in reducing emissions.
- ☛ Watch your fuel consumption. Check your fuel consumption, and make sure your car is running as efficiently as possible. If in doubt, get it serviced
- ☛ Drive more slowly! It can save lives, but will also save you money. For example, you use 30% more fuel driving at 70mph than 50mph
- ☛ Drive more smoothly! Think ahead - and avoid sharp braking and rapid acceleration. It saves fuel.
- ☛ Switch off - don't idle! If you've stopped, switch off! If you're idling, while waiting or in a traffic jam, you're getting zero miles to the gallon. So, switch off if you can - and that applies to the air conditioning too!
- ☛ Check your tyre pressure If your tyres are at the right pressure, you'll drive more smoothly and save fuel
- ☛ Cut down wind resistance Remove roof racks and other accessories if you're not using them: a fully loaded roof rack increases consumption by 30%!
- ☛ Use your gears as efficiently as possible Drive in as high a gear as possible. You'll use a quarter less fuel doing 40mph in fifth than in third!
- ☛ Travel light! If you don't need it, don't take it.
- ☛ Plan your journey! There's no surer way to waste fuel than to get lost! Be certain that you have planned the best way to your destination, and think about the time you travel - don't travel in the rush hour, if you can avoid it
- ☛ Share your trips If you can share your car, you'll save emissions and share the cost.



A Sideways Look John Morrison

The late and largely unlamented Millennium has been and gone. Even those pedants like me who were under the impression that a new century begins with '01' rather than '00' have welcomed in the 'Noughties' with a muted cheer and a bottle of the finest Armenian wine that small change can buy. I don't know about you, but I'm happy to get back to what passes for normality in a small Pennine milltown. I'll be happier still if I never hear the accursed M-word again.

We are told - mostly by Railtrack publicists, with their fingers crossed - that the trains, too, will soon be back to normal. I'll believe that when I see it. In a few short months the company has achieved the seemingly impossible: making us nostalgic for the good old days of British Rail and their sandwiches.

The lines require a rolling programme of maintenance and repair, year in, year

out. But it seems that the custodians of our railway network can only react to crisis. A maintenance schedule should not need kick-starting by a tragic event such as the rail-crash at Hatfield.

It's depressing that people have to queue up, after a day's work, waiting for a train that may or may not arrive. It's even more depressing that shareholders seem to be at the front of the queue, and rail travellers somewhere near the back. But Railtrack is guilty of much worse than this kind of routine incompetence. They're doing something truly unforgivable: driving people off the trains in droves, and back into their cars.

Once we get behind the wheel, we'll do anything - absolutely anything - to keep on driving. To occupy those few square metres of Tarmac, we'll sell our souls to the devil (or at least discuss some kind of time-share option).

Never mind that city traffic now moves

TRANSPORTS OF DELIGHT

It is hard to imagine a future without the internal combustion engine - and particularly the private car. But most of us know that our present car culture is unsustainable.

Cars are affecting our health and the health of our wildlife and countryside. Ultimately they are also affecting the health of the planet and future generations.

Road transport is currently the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. From 1980 to 1996 there was a 63% increase in motor traffic in Britain, almost all of which was due to cars. By 2016 there is expected to be between a quarter and half as much traffic again.

Driving is the second most ecologically damaging thing most people do (air travel is the worst). But giving up the car habit is not easy. It is particularly difficult in rural areas where there is little alternative to the car.

Part of the problem is the lack of a decent

public transport system. Compare the situation in this country with Holland. There they have a fully integrated public transport system, which has been established by the highways and planning departments working closely with the train and bus companies. The airports, train, bus and tram stations are situated together so that it is possible to get off the train, straight onto a bus or tram. The trains etc are frequent, clean, you are never very far from a tram or bus stop and public transport is considered the norm rather than a sort of poor person's alternative. Easy.

We are a long way from that in this country. Some new technologies are on the horizon now though that make the future look a bit brighter. For instance, there are new smart traffic signals that can give priority to buses and other preferred vehicles. There are also bus stops that tell you where the next bus is, at what speed it is travelling and when you

can expect it to arrive.

Another big step towards convenience on all forms of public transport may soon be the use of intelligent 'smart cards' in place of tickets. These can open station barriers without even being taken out of your pocket. They can be 'charged' with a stored value, giving access to public transport systems for a set time or set number of journeys. The result should (in theory) allow seamless transfers between different forms of public transport, reduce ticket prices and help cut down on fare-dodgers.

New advances like these, together with cleaner fuels (LPG, electric and hybrid vehicles and fuel cells), mean that there is some hope for a better and much less environmentally damaging transport system in the future.

In the meantime check out this month's Going Green for Softies.....

What on Earth is.....Permaculture?

Permaculture - A word that invariably evokes a "Oh yes, I've heard of that - but what on earth is it?". It sounds like an Alaskan yoghurt or some dodgy biological experiment but is actually an approach to designing systems so that they can be more sustainable. It achieves this by using the patterns and processes of natural systems. Why? Because natural systems are the most sustainable systems we know (having been around for a fair few years) but also because every system in nature is like a cog in a bigger machine. If we re-arrange that cog without taking notice of the role it plays, the whole machine can go wrong. It's about trying to see the output of the whole system as relevant, not just the individual components.

Take the example of the recent flooding. Among the causes are changes made to the way land in river catchment areas is used. The original forest has been replaced with grass and concrete with no regard to the role it played in the whole river system. The result is that rivers burst their banks and damaged property and business.

Permaculture does not advocate returning the catchment area to its natural state - humans have to make a living after all. But it would design the area so that we could get what we need from it without affecting its role in retaining water.

The same philosophy also applies, on a smaller scale, to, for

instance, the role that ladybirds play in keeping aphid populations down. Because natural systems are all linked, they get what they need from each other, using what they have in the most efficient way, thereby reducing waste, over consumption and pollution.

So, how do we do that, then? By understanding the system you are working with, using good, well thought out design, then looking at how you can get what you need from what you've got without clearing it all and starting from scratch. The solutions that permaculture finds are often the same as those found by environmentalists looking at recycling or organic gardeners trying to avoid chemicals.

Bill Mollison and David Holmgren who first coined the term permaculture in the 1970's described it as a philosophy, which pulls together past and present common sense. Indeed, many of the techniques used are not modern. Some of the best ideas for re-using waste were discovered during the Second World War, or by isolated island communities who have had to be self-reliant. What makes permaculture different is the bringing together of these techniques into one approach, working out holistic solutions, which take into account all the elements, so that inputs and outputs are used most effectively.

FARMER'S MARKETS

There are plans to start up a regular Farmers' Market in Hebden Bridge. The first one is due to be held on Wednesday 14th March. The market will

have stalls selling locally produced goods (within a 40 mile radius). If you are interested in more details contact Mr Senior at the Markets' Group, 19 Albion St, Halifax, HX1 1DU. Tel. 359034. E-mail: Calderdale-markets@dial.pipex.com

New Year's Quiz

Here are the answers to the New Year's Quiz which appeared on the last Green Page.

1. In which city were the recent international climate talks held?
Answer: The Hague
2. Who has said: It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it.?
Answer: US President Elect George W Bush (thank you George for those words of wisdom).
3. What does CFL stand for?
Answer: Compact Fluorescent Lamp / Lightbulb
4. Who invented the clockwork radio?
Answer: Trevor Bayliss
5. Which poet recently unveiled the ATC's poems against dog poo plaques?
Answer: John Hegley
6. On products made of what material might you find the FSC logo?
Answer: Wood (FSC stands for Forest Stewardship Council and is the symbol that guarantees that the wood comes from a sustainably managed forest)
7. Does Calderdale offer facilities for recycling household plastics? Yes / No
Answer: No
8. Where is Britain's first offshore wind farm?
Answer: Just off the coast at Blyth, Nnrthumberland
9. Chancellor Gordon Brown recently cut the duty on ULSP - what does ULSP stand for?
Answer: Ultra Low Sulphur Petrol
10. Whose frozen vegetables are now all organic?
Answer: Iceland